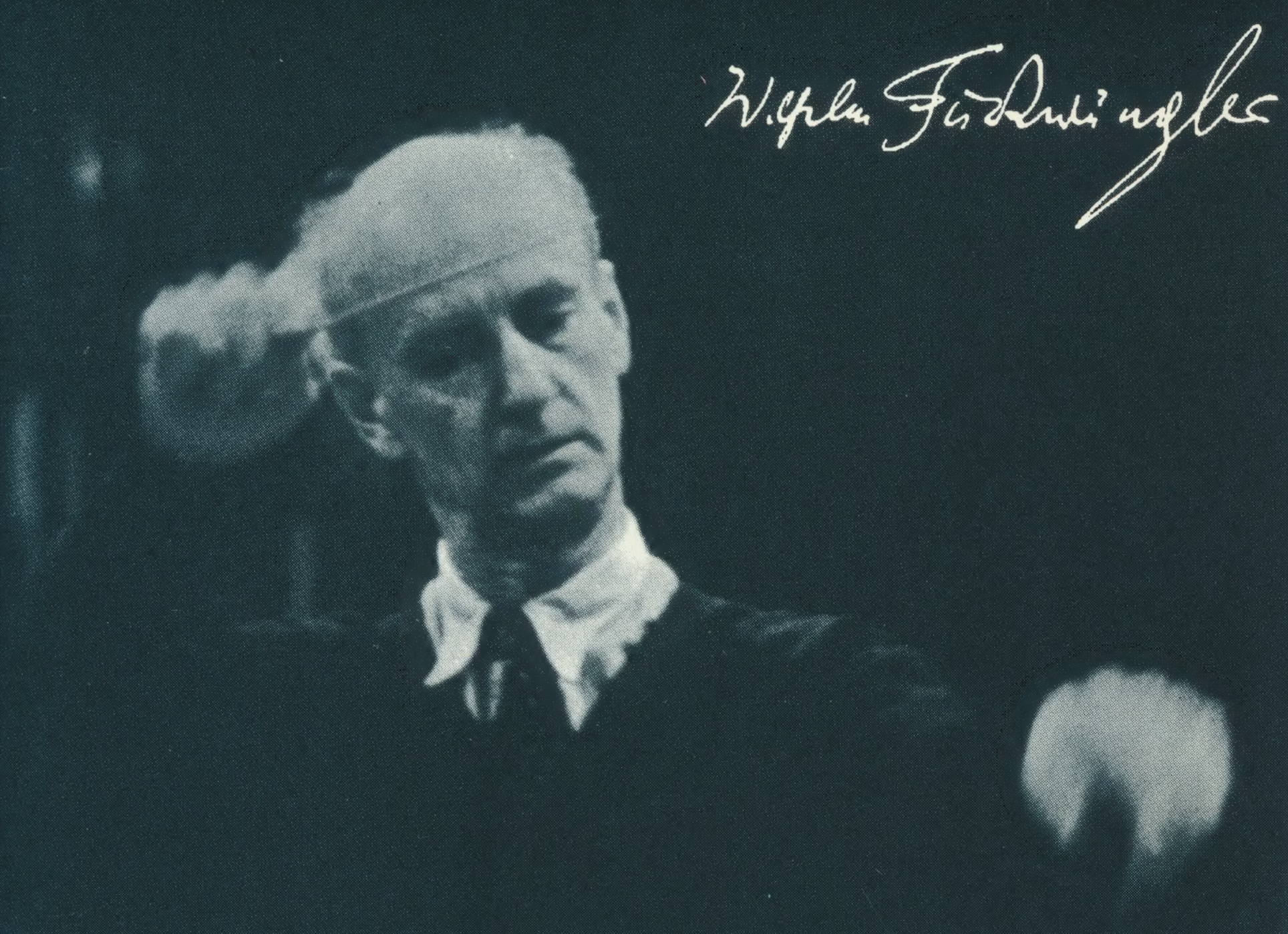

RICHARD STRAUSS:

Don Juan · Till Eulenspiegel
Tod und Verklärung
4 Songs with Orchestra

FURTWÄNGLER conducts RICHARD STRAUSS

CONCERT PERFORMANCES FROM THE 1940s

1	**Don Juan** BPO, 15/17 Feb. 1942 (Philharmonie)	17:23
2	**Till Eulenspiegel** BPO, 13/16 Nov. 1943 (Philharmonie)	15:06
	Four Songs with Orchestra Peter Anders, tenor; BPO, 15/17 Feb. 1942 (Philharmonie)	
3	Waldseligkeit, Op. 49 No. 1 (R. Dehmel)	2:46
4	Liebeshymnus, Op. 32 No. 3 (K. Henckell)	9:27
5	Verführung, Op. 33 No.1 (J.H. Mackay)	10:32
6	Winterliebe, Op. 48 No. 5 (K. Henckell)	1:33
7	**Tod und Verklärung** (Death and Transfiguration) Hamburg State Philharmonic, 9 June 1947 (Musikhalle, Hamburg)	25:05

TOTAL TIME: 73:17

TECHNICAL NOTE: [1]-[6] recorded on Magnetophon tape by the Reichsrundfunk Gesellschaft. The tapes had limited fidelity and the peak passages were overloaded. [7], a post-war tape recording, probably using the Magnetophon system, had background static throughout which could not be eliminated in the digital transfer process.

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FURTWÄNGLER conducts RICHARD STRAUSS
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RECENT FURTWÄNGLER RELEASES ON THE MUSIC & ARTS CD LABEL

CD·826 **WEBER**: Freischütz Overture, BPO, 20/22 March 1944 (Staatsoper); **SCHUBERT**: Symphony No. 9 in C, D.944 "Choral", BPO, 27/30 June or 6/8 Dec. 1942 (Philharmonie); **BEETHOVEN**: Coriolan Overture, BPO, 27/30 June 1943 (Philharmonie).

CD·818 **BEETHOVEN**: Symphony No. 9. Erna Berger, soprano; Gertrude Pitzinger, contralto; Walther Ludwig, tenor; Rudolf Watzke, bass; BPO and Bruno Kittel Choir, London (Queens Hall), 1937.

CD·814 **BEETHOVEN**: *Symphony No. 3 in e-flat, Op. 55,* VPO, Musikvereinsaal, Dec. 1944 & **STRAUSS**: *Don Juan, Op. 20,* Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Konserthus, Stockholm, 25 Nov. 1942.

CD·805 **BRUCKNER:** *Symphony No. 6 in A,* BPO, 13/16 Nov. 1943; **BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 1 in c,* Op. 68, BPO (Admiralspalast) 23 Jan. 1945; *Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56,* BPO (Philharmonie), 12/15 Dec. 1943.

CD·804(4) **BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 1 in c, Op. 68,* Lucerne Festival Orchestra, 27 Aug. 1947; *Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 73,* VPO, 28 Jan. 1945; *Symphony No. 3 in F,* BPO (Turin), 14 May 1954; *Symphony No. 4 in e, Op. 98,* BPO, 12-15 Dec. 1943; *Concerto No. 2 in B-flat for Piano & Orchestra,* Edwin Fischer, BPO, 8 Nov. 1942; *Violin Concerto in D, Op. 77,* Gioconda de Vito, Turin Radio Orchestra, 7 March 1952; *Haydn Variations, Op. 56a,* VPO, 18 Dec. 1943.

CD·802(2) **SCHUBERT:** *Symphony No. 8* (1st vmt) & *Symphony No. 9;* **JOHANN STRAUSS JR.:** *Emperor Waltz* (fragment only), all with VPO, Stockholm Konserthus, 12 May 1943; **HAYDN:** *Symphony No. 94;* **STRAUSS:** *Don Juan;* **BEETHOVEN:** *Symphony No. 5,* all with VPO, Stockholm Konserthus, 25 Sept. 1950

CD·799 **SIBELIUS**: *Violin Concerto in d, Op. 47,* Georg Kulenkampff, violin, BPO (7-8 Feb. 1943); *En Saga, Op. 9* – two versions, BPO (7-8 Feb. 1943) & VPO (25 Sep. 1950, Stockholm). [AAD]

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FURTWÄNGLER AND RICHARD STRAUSS

Even though Furtwängler and Strauss were contemporaries, one does not connect them in the same sense as one links Furtwängler to Wagner. Yet he conducted more pieces by Strauss and programmed Strauss more often. In fact, in terms of numbers, his performances of Strauss's music rank just below those of Beethoven and Brahms. In his repertory at one time or another was music from all periods of Strauss's writing, from the early tone poems and operas to the late *Metamorphosen*. Furtwängler also gave the world premiere of *Vier letzte Lieder* in 1950.

But only three Strauss works were allowed a place in his programs from the earliest years through the last; these were also the only works by Strauss he recorded commercially—*Don Juan*, *Tod und Verklärung*, and *Till Eulenspiegel*. All three are quite different but share a common bond: each involves the death of its hero. What must have appealed to Furtwängler was that two of them are based loosely but recognizably on classical forms and the third, *Tod und Verklärung*, was an outgrowth of Strauss's early infatuation with Wagner and *Tristan und Isolde*.

While Furtwängler certainly appreciated Strauss's music up to a point and surely recognized its immediacy and the enormous effect it had on an audience, he did not entirely approve of a good deal of it. In *Gespräche über Musik* he writes:

> Classical music is imbued with a kind of musical logic, which in its way, is no less stern, no less compelling than the logic of a train of thought. Anybody who experiences an adequate performance of such a work immediately and automatically feels it. This musical "logic"... pervades the entire *oeuvre* of the classical composers. Later, it gradually became weaker, thinner, less cogent, [for] when program music came into fashion, an attempt was made, by means of an artificial logic imposed from without, to replace the purely musical one, and substitute through the program [something] more tangible...
>
> It was gradually felt — Liszt started the trend — that the laws of pure music, which presupposed a persistent musical elaboration of the whole of a composition, were superfluous, if not actually detrimental, from the point of view of a maximum momentary effect. It was sufficient if details were made to stand out in bold relief.... No attention at all was paid to the *whole;* that was confidently left to the "program." Strauss himself was by no means unaffected by this.
>
> It was, of course, possible by this means to achieve momentarily greater freedom of movement and to create something new. But at what a price! From the purely musical point of view, music was "put together." What had once been an organism became an "arrangement" — rather like a flower arrangement. This can often be done with a great deal of taste, but it has no connection whatever with the eternal laws of music.

This is the continuation of an idea expressed in a notebook entry for 1938:

> Program music by its very nature represents a more transparent state of consciousness than absolute music. With true program music, beginning with Liszt, the inner necessity of music in general comes to an end. Strauss's music-historical theory is — naively — based solely on this state of consciousness, just as [it is when] Liszt says that writing sonatas is an impossible task. This is the point, the decisive point where the develop-

ment of any sort of music *separated* from the development of the state of consciousness that bears it. This is where the problem of today's music first arises....

Why is it so irritating when real music is verbally reproduced as moods? Because a mood is something subjective, but real music is [an] organism, and [an] organism is something objective. That the organism is subjectively explicable, subjectively rooted, does nothing to alter its essence, which is different in principle. It is — it does not represent. To understand a Beethoven symphony verbally, as a mood, is as impossible as it is dishonest.

Though Furtwängler, the committed classicist, had great reservations about what he regarded as a weakening of fundamental musical principles, he became, nonetheless, a stirring advocate of the best in programmatic music. One only has to remember his rousing recording of Liszt's *Les préludes* (a disc he was reluctant to make) or his exhilarating performances of *Don Juan* and *En Saga*. Though he was not oblivious to the decorative and storytelling aspects of Strauss's music and the powerful spells they could cast, what distinguishes his performances are the tensile strength and high degree of sensuality he brought to the music; there was no further weakening of these already free-formed musical constructions with exaggerated rubatos and superfluous emotional layers.

* * * * *

Furtwängler played *Don Juan* as an unabashed orchestral showpiece, keeping its textures transparent and moving through the music with a directness and dispatch that played down its sectional character. A key to his performance surely lies in this tone poem's having been based on the work of the Austrian poet Nicolaus Lenau. Don Juan as seen by Lenau, Strauss, and Furtwängler is a brilliant, positive, healthy figure. He is dashing, idealistic, and not at all like Mozart's rakish Don Giovanni or Byron's ironic Don Juan.

Furtwängler gives us a *Don Juan* of consummate theater. It has brilliance, motion, and, as Daniel Barenboim points out,

> Furtwängler understood better than anyone that to construct a musical work you must create a "sound-world." To this end he had his own laws, physical and acoustical, so far as tempo, intensity, dynamics, and balance were concerned.... He made these different expressive elements coexist in a truly organic form. It was something almost biological.

The first of two wartime performances [heard on this CD] provides Furtwängler's most exacting and exciting version of the score. Here, in Berlin, he is at his most thrilling and impetuous, and the playing of the Philharmonic is extraordinary in its dash and vivaciousness. The Stockholm performance, later in 1942, seems more earthbound and not as headlong in its inception. Nor is the playing nearly as idiomatic and poised.

* * * * *

There is scant choice between the three existing performances of *Tod und Verklärung*. The Hamburg performance of 1947 is fiery but messy, and the one five years later from Turin — better played than most of Furtwängler's concerts with the city's Radio Orchestra — is only sporadically effective. Superior on all levels is the commercial recording made in Vienna in 1950. It is softer and more suffused with light than the other two, and it scales greater orchestral heights.

* * * * *

Strauss's score of *Till Eulenspiegel* clearly characterizes the work as a rondeau, yet it is inevitably labeled a rondo. Obviously, Strauss knew the difference between these two musical forms as well as their similarities. *Till*, for all its spontaneity of expression, is, of course, very rondo-like; at the same time it is more, and surely Strauss's use of the older term was not a simple matter of quaintness or spelling. It seems to have been more a play on words intended to add yet another subtle level of meaning to this score. It is a further "merry prank," if you will, one of Strauss's making rather than Till's. By labeling the work a rondeau, Strauss turns it into a rogue's ballad, one that is sung in Furtwängler's performances in a boisterous and mocking manner.

It is odd that of Strauss's three most famous tone poems, *Till* is the one with the most audible program, though it was the one for which the composer initially was the most reluctant to supply a story line. But even had he not done so, there would have been no missing the high theater of the piece in Furtwängler's performances, as Till in turn plays out his various roles — prankster, adventurer, jester, mockprelate, cavalier, and knave. All seven of Furtwängler's recordings are filled to overflowing with a gallantry of spirit, a galloping purpose, crispness, and humor.

Till was among the first extensive scores Furtwängler recorded (and the first instance in which parts of a rehearsal were preserved). This 1930 version is in unusually good sound for the period, though the big lines of the music are more apparent than its detail. A much more in-depth idea of his way with the music comes from a wartime Berlin concert in 1943 [heard on this CD], but while exciting and even demonic, it is too fierce for the essential lightness of the idea and the music. More in keeping with Till's mischievousness is the performance filmed in 1951 for the German documentary *Botschafter der Musik*, a brief history of the Berlin Philharmonic.

* * * * *

We have been left with eight Strauss orchestral lieder conducted by Furtwängler[1], but such is the quality of the recordings, and in several instances the nature of the music, that the emphases here fall more on the two singers than the overall ensemble. There is no difficulty in feeling a well-established musical atmosphere in each song, but because of the dominance of the voices, it is not always easy to place oneself within these musical landscapes. Still, there are incredible beauties to savor, chiefly the emotional peaks of "Verführung" and the ardor of "Winterliebe," both heightened by the youthful splendor of Peter Anders's voice.

Notes excerpted with the kind permission of the author from his book *The Furtwängler Record*, to be published by Amadeus Press in 1994

[1]Besides the four songs heard on this CD, there is the Four Last Songs with Flagstad and the Philharmonia, from May 1950.

RICHARD STRAUSS

Don Juan · Till Eulenspiegel
Four Orchestral Songs · Tod und Verklärung

Wilhelm Furtwängler

CD·829

Total Time: 73:17

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